

## **YHS and YRBS 2013 Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. Why are there two different surveys on adolescent health in Massachusetts?**

The Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) has been conducted among public high school students by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) every two years since 1993. The YRBS measures high school risk behaviors over time. CDC provides many of the questions for the survey and states have limited ability to add their own questions. Beginning in 2007, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) began a companion survey, the Massachusetts Youth Health Survey (YHS). The YHS covers topics that are not included on the YRBS high school survey and also gathers data on middle school students' health risks and behaviors. The YRBS and YHS are now conducted simultaneously in order to reduce the burden on selected schools and to avoid duplication of effort in recruiting schools to participate and in administering the survey. The Center for Survey Research at UMass-Boston is the vendor that administers both surveys and ensures they have similar methodologies.

Altogether in 2013, 9,185 students in 144 schools participated in the YHS and YRBS surveys. The DPH report, *A Profile of Health Among Massachusetts Middle and High School Students, 2013*, is based findings of the YHS survey. The report provides more in-depth comparative descriptive analyses of health risks and health behaviors by sex, race/ethnicity, and grade of middle and high school students. Issues like sports-related traumatic brain injuries, physical activity and nutrition, prescription medication abuse, gambling, and some significant declines across years are presented. It is designed to complement the joint report, *Health and Risk Behaviors of Massachusetts Youth, 2013*, which is based on the findings of the YHS and YRBS surveys.

### **2. Why are there two separate reports being issued this year?**

Since 2007, ESE and DPH have issued a joint report on adolescent health. The purpose of this report is to provide a general overview of the health status of Massachusetts public school students in grades 6 through 12. This report, *'Health and Risk Behaviors of Massachusetts Youth, 2013'* is based on both the YHS and YRBS surveys and is aimed at school superintendents, teachers, parents, and community members. DPH also issues a second report, *'A Profile of Health Among Massachusetts Middle and High School Students, 2013'* based on the YHS survey that complements the joint report and provides more in-depth analyses, with data presented by sex, race/ethnicity, and grade of middle and high school students, and includes YHS-specific questions not in the joint report.

### **3. Why do the two reports sometimes contain different estimates for the same indicator?**

Although the two surveys are administered at the same schools, they are administered in separate classes to different groups of students. Since there are two different samples, we expect that results will be very similar but not exactly the same.

#### **4. How can I use the data on the same topic but in different reports?**

The two reports are intended to complement one another. The joint report, *‘Health and Risk Behaviors of Massachusetts Youth, 2013’* is intended to provide a broad overview of the main issues affecting the health of students in grades six through twelve. The report is divided into 17 topics and each can be read independently. We recommend beginning with this report to gain an understanding of the “big picture” for the topic(s) of interest to you. If you need more detail than is provided in this report (e.g. differences by sex, race/ethnicity, or grade), then you will want to follow-up with more in-depth analyses provided in *‘A Profile of Health Among Massachusetts Middle and High School Students, 2013’*.

#### **5. How can I access these reports or get more information?**

The two reports will be available online at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/hprograms/yrbs/> and <http://www.mass.gov/dph/hsp>.

For more information, please contact Chiniqua Milligan at [cmilligan@doe.mass.edu](mailto:cmilligan@doe.mass.edu) for YRBS requests and MyDzung Chu at [mydzung.chu@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:mydzung.chu@massmail.state.ma.us) for YHS requests.

YRBS data is also available on the CDC website:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>

#### **6. Can I get data for my community?**

Both YRBS and YHS are designed to provide statewide estimates. Since only a subset of Massachusetts public schools is included in the sample, it is not possible at this time to provide community-level data from either of these surveys. Many cities or regions conduct their own surveys. You can check with your school superintendent or principal to find out if they participate in a local survey.